

General Gordon's Mission

Why He Went to the Sudan.

The idea of sending an English officer to supervise the withdrawal of the Sudanese garrisons and the dismantling of their forts was first suggested by Sir Evelyn Baring, who was then British Consul-General in Mahdi, was first broached by Sir Evelyn Baring in the fall of 1883. On December 1st of that year the British Government agreed to send a mission to Egypt headed by Gordon. In Egypt its main capacity was specified, but Sir Evelyn objected and the matter was for a time dropped. In June 1884 the British Government received and published the report of a long interview with Gordon, and Lord Granville a day or two after again asked Sir Evelyn Baring what he thought could not be profitably done. It played in his mind for some days before Sir Evelyn accepted, but affairs remained shortly afterwards so serious as aspect at Khartoum that it appeared necessary to accept the offer. The mission was organized at once. So Sir Evelyn reluctantly agreed to Lord Granville's proposal, and on January 19 General Gordon set out for Khartoum.

Hicks and his army had lately been annihilated. There was a political crisis in Cairo and Egyptian skies were cloudy over the quarter. On January 16, Governor Hicks, who had been sent to Khartoum, arrived in Cairo, received his commission the following day as Governor-General of the Sudan, with plenary powers, and the next day he left for Khartoum. He was armed only with moral force and a walking stick. "Be not afraid. I am coming," was the message he sent in advance to the beleaguered city. On January 20 he arrived there safely on February 10. Mountain matters elsewhere went from bad to worse. On February 4, General Hicks died of cholera at Khartoum. At Tokar, a week later the rebels took the town. On February 21, Tokar fell into Osman Digna's hands. Then came the news of the capture of Khartoum by the rebels. Hicks and Sir Stanley were slain in the defence of the rebels, and those for a time distracted attention from the de-

myself free to act according to circum-

shall do so. If I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. I cannot, I shall retire to my country and I shall endeavour to find the disgrace of abandoning the country of Syria, Russia, Berber, Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to do so. I shall not be in any great difficulty if you would rather let me go. I shall go."

At the same time Gordon said he was quite hemmed in and had provisions for about five months; and in his desperation he proposed to appeal to the millionaires of the world to supply him with the necessary arms and ammunition. In his careless attitude of the British Government toward him may be seen in Lord Granville's despatch of April 26: "Gordon is in a very difficult position, and it is not proposed to supply him with Turkish or other forces. Add expressions both of respect and gratitude for his gallant and meritorious conduct and for the good he has done."

On June 10 word came that Berber had been captured and the inhabitants massacred by the insurgents. Khartoum was threatened. The British Government did nothing until August 5, when the House of Commons was asked for a vote of credit of \$5,000,000, to begin the relief of Khartoum. On August 10 they later the Mufti of Dongola received a letter from Gordon, asking how many troops were coming to his relief, and by what route. On this day Major Kitchener was at Dongola. He sent Major Johnston, and Sir Evelyn Wood on his way to Assouan and Wady Halfa, where a considerable Egyptian force had been gathered. The British Government had decided the route to follow to reach Khartoum, and at last the Nile route was decided upon, and an expedition fitted out under General Hicks, and the British Government was prepared to pass the Nile rapids a camel-caravan for service on the desert, etc. Lord Wolseley left England to lead this expedition.

Meanwhile Gordon had been making the best of his position at Khartoum. El Mahdi had rejected his offer to recognize him as Sultan of Kordofan. Gordon took the only course open to him.

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don at this time estimated El Mahdi's

The messenger who brought the letter to Wolsey's camp described Gordon as spending his nights in a restless watch, and that he was always ready to start on his way into the desert. He had two palaces, with a gun mounted on each of them. He always examined the guns at intervals, and he was always ready to start on his way into the desert. He had two palaces, with a gun mounted on each of them. He always examined the guns at intervals, and he was always ready to start on his way into the desert. He had two palaces, with a gun mounted on each of them. He always examined the guns at intervals, and he was always ready to start on his way into the desert.



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